

REMARKS

Claims 1 to 8, 10, and 12 are currently active in the application. Claims 5 to 8 have been withdrawn from consideration. Reconsideration of claims 1 to 8, 10, and 12 in a view of further discussion is respectfully requested

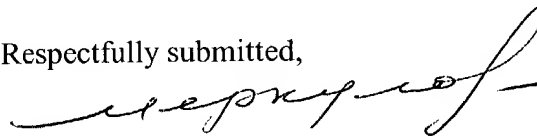
Claims 1-4 and 9-12 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hayes et al. (U.S. Patent 6,480,586) in view of Nathan et al. (U.S. Patent 6,308,204) further in view of Borgstahl et al. (U.S. Patent 5,909,183). This rejection is respectfully traversed for the reason that the primary reference to Hayes et al. is not a valid reference since it has a filing date later than the priority filing date for the present application. Specifically, the application from which the patent to Hayes et al. has matured was filed on July 25, 2000, and the foreign priority day for the present invention is May 11, 2000. Therefore, a certified English language translation of the priority document is filed concurrently in order to eliminate the primary reference to Hayes et al.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully requested that the application be reconsidered, a premature finality withdrawn and claims 1 to 8, 10, and 12 be allowed, and that the application be passed to issue.

Should the Examiner find the application to be other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to discuss any other changes deemed necessary in a telephonic or personal interview.

A provisional petition is hereby made for any extension of time necessary for the continued pendency during the life of this application. Please charge any fees for such provisional petition and any deficiencies in fees and credit any overpayment of fees to Attorney's Deposit Account No. 50-2041 Whitham, Curtis & Christofferson, P.C.).

Respectfully submitted,



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